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Secretariat

ST/AI/384/Add.2
14 October 1993

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION

To: Members of the staff

From: The Director of Personnel

Subject: 1993 COMPETITIVE EXAMINATION FOR PROMOTION TO THE PROFESSIONAL CATEGORY OF STAFF MEMBERS FROM OTHER CATEGORIES*

Addendum

1. The present addendum to administrative instruction ST/AI/384 of 9 July 1993, which governs the 1993 competitive examinations scheduled to be held in January-February 1994, supersedes administrative instruction ST/AI/375 and Amend.1. It is issued pursuant to Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/173 of 29 August 1979 and takes into consideration the reports of the Central Examination Board (CEB) on the previous examinations and the recommendations made by the Staff/Management Coordination Committee as a result of its review of the procedures governing the competitive examination.

2. The purpose of the present instruction is to set out policies and procedures governing the selection of occupational groups for which the examination will be held, the selection of posts at the P-2 level subject to geographical distribution to be filled by promotion through the examination, the eligibility requirements for staff members wishing to sit for the examination, the organization of the examination and the selection and promotion of successful candidates. The selection of staff to fill Professional posts with special language requirements, such as posts of translators and editors, will continue to be made through separate competitive examinations.

Selection of posts

3. The Office of Human Resources Management, taking into account information provided by departments and offices at all duty stations, has established projections of the P-2 posts subject to geographical distribution that will be

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* Personnel Manual index No. 4363.

or are expected to become available during 1993. On the basis of these projections, CEB has made an initial identification of those types of posts that may be filled by promotion through competitive examination and has determined the occupational groups for which the examination is to be held, namely:

Administration

Electronic Data Processing

Finance

Security

Statistics

4. The written portion of all examinations will be held in January-February 1994.

5. The total number of posts to be selected for this purpose will be approximately 30 per cent of the projected number of P-2 posts subject to geographical distribution that will be or are expected to become available during 1993. The remaining P-2 posts will be filled through the recruitment of external candidates or the reassignment of staff members already in the Professional category.

6. Prior to the oral examination, candidates convoked for that part of the examination will receive from the Office of Human Resources Management a list, approved by CEB, of all the posts available in the relevant occupational group and will be requested to indicate in order of preference those posts for which they wish to be considered. In addition to the list of posts, candidates will also receive a description of the functions for those posts. It should be noted that an expression of preference by a candidate for a particular post at a given duty station indicates the staff member's readiness to serve in that post at the duty station where it is located, if successful in the examination. The oral examination will not be held before the list of posts is available for distribution to the candidates concerned.

Applications

7. Staff members are invited to apply for no more than two of the occupational groups in which the examination is to be held. An application form is annexed to administrative instruction ST/AI/384 for this purpose.

Eligibility requirements

8. The competitive examination is open to all staff members in the General Service and other categories, including the Field Service category up to and including the FS-5 level, provided that they have a minimum of five years' continuous service in the Secretariat, have a satisfactory record of performance (the most recent performance evaluation report must also be submitted with the application), have a contract valid until at least 30 September 1994 and meet the requirements set out below. It should be noted that short breaks in service may be allowed at the discretion of CEB.

9. For those staff members who have served a minimum of five years of continuous service in the Secretariat by 31 December 1993 the following shall apply: they must hold at least a first-level university degree, proof of which must be furnished with the application form.

10. In order to protect the acquired rights of long-serving staff, it has been decided that for those staff members who had served AT LEAST FIVE YEARS by 31 December 1989, the following requirements shall apply: they must submit with their application acceptable evidence of post-secondary academic qualifications.

11. For those staff members who have sat for previous competitive examinations, the following shall also apply, in addition to the requirements stipulated in either paragraph 9 or 10 above:

(a) They must have achieved a mark of at least 30 per cent in the overall written portion of the previous examination in the occupational group(s) for which they are now applying;

(b) In cases where the staff member did not obtain 30 per cent, the staff member should be prepared to submit to CEB a description of the efforts made in preparing for the new examination (e.g. courses taken, hours of study, materials used, field work, transcripts).

12. Owing to the special technical nature of the occupational group of Security, staff members in the General Service and Related categories, including the Field Service category up to and including the FS-5 level, must satisfy the following criteria:

(a) At least five years of experience as a Security Officer in the United Nations or five years of service in a post with functions directly related to United Nations security (short breaks in service may, however, be allowed at the discretion of CEB);

(b) A good working knowledge of English or French;

(c) Hold a first level university degree; however, staff members who have five years' service with the Organization as of 31 December 1989 will be exempt from this requirement.

13. Staff members who had previously served continuously for at least five years with the United Nations Secretariat, had resigned and, by 31 December 1993, would have served continuously for at least three years since their reappointment will also be considered eligible, provided that they satisfy the other requirements.

14. Staff members who have been found ineligible by CEB to sit for the examination will be informed of the reason for that decision. Staff members who have cause to believe that they have been unfairly excluded from participating in the examination may present their case to CEB for review. Such appeals must be received by CEB at Headquarters within 10 working days of the receipt of notification of rejection. In order to meet this deadline, candidates serving at offices away from Headquarters must submit their appeal to the Chairman of CEB by telegram.

Format and substance of the examination

15. The examination will be conducted in such a way as to take into account the cultural and linguistic diversity of the United Nations and will consist of both a written and an oral examination:

(a) Written examination (90 per cent of the marks). The written examination consists of two parts: part I, general examination; and part II, specialized examination. The general examination consists of section 1, analytical capacity; section 2, capacity to draft and to summarize; and section 3, international affairs. The general examination is a core examination which is common to all occupations. The specialized examinations test knowledge of the occupations;

(b) Oral part (10 per cent of the marks). The oral examination is designed to evaluate the candidates' ability to communicate and to illustrate their views in a clear, understandable and concise way. Topics and questions used in the oral examination will be of a general nature, broadly related to the occupational group. From two topics selected at random, the candidates will choose the one on which they wish to make their presentation. The candidates will also be asked complementary questions on the topic chosen, as well as other questions of a general nature, also broadly related to the occupational group.

16. As a matter of principle, all the examination papers will follow a similar format. Likewise, a standardized format will be followed in the oral examination.

17. The written examination for a given occupational group will be administered simultaneously at all duty stations. It will be scheduled so as to permit all candidates who have applied for more than one occupational group to write the required papers. Eligible candidates will be informed in writing of the exact date, time and location of the written examination. The use of non-programmable calculators is permitted in all parts of the examination. Staff members who have to sit for the examination outside established working hours will be granted compensatory time off.

Composition and responsibility of the Central Examination Board

18. CEB is composed of five members appointed by the Secretary-General: a chairman selected from among staff serving at Headquarters, with the concurrence of the representatives of the staff; two members nominated by the representatives of the staff, one of whom will be from a duty station away from Headquarters; and two members nominated by the Director of Personnel, one of whom will be from a third duty station. The membership of CEB for the thirteenth round of the examination will remain in office until the Board is reconstituted for the 1993 examination. CEB will have a non-voting ex officio member representing the Director of Personnel. The composition of CEB will be announced in an addendum to this administrative instruction.

19. CEB has the following responsibilities:

(a) To oversee the procedures and arrangements for the examination;

(b) To screen all applications and determine the eligibility of candidates to sit for the examination;

(c) To review appeals and complaints of candidates regarding the examination;

(d) To select and approve, on the basis of a list of projections provided by the Office of Human Resources Management, the posts to be filled through the competitive examinations;

(e) To review and decide upon recommendations made by the specialized boards, especially on arrangements for the marking of papers, recommendations on which candidates are to be convoked to the oral examination, based on results of the written examination, recommendations on the attainment of the minimum professional standards required for promotion and recommendations for the promotion of successful candidates;

(f) To establish the final ranking of candidates and then, taking into account the expressions of preference by the candidates, to assign the posts to the successful candidates;

(g) To make recommendations to the Secretary-General regarding procedures for and possible improvements in future examinations;

(h) To decide, pursuant to paragraph 3 above, which occupational groups will be selected for the next examination.

Composition and responsibility of the specialized boards

20. A specialized board of examiners will be set up for each occupational group selected for the examination. Additional boards of examiners will be set up to mark the general examination paper. Specialized boards will normally be composed of staff members of the Secretariat; however, staff members of the specialized agencies or outside experts may also be employed in agreement between representatives of the Secretary-General and representatives of the staff.

21. Each specialized board of examiners will be appointed by the Secretary-General and will consist of a chairman elected by the members of the specialized board, at least one or two members nominated by the Director of Personnel and an equal number of members nominated by the representatives of the staff. Each specialized board will have a non-voting ex officio member representing the Director of Personnel.

22. Under the overall responsibility of CEB, the specialized boards will:

(a) Mark the written examination;

(b) Report to CEB the results of the written examination, which will consist of the consolidated mark of the general paper and the specialized paper;

(c) Make recommendations to CEB regarding the minimum professional standard required;

(d) Recommend to CEB the number of candidates (who are not identified by name) to be convoked to the oral examination for each occupational group, based on the results of the written examination;

(e) Conduct the oral examination;

(f) Recommend to CEB the final ranking of candidates (who are not identified by name) in order of merit by occupational group, based on the total of the combined results of the written and oral examinations.

Responsibility of the Examinations and Tests Section

23. In accordance with Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/Organization, section P (II), the Examinations and Tests Section has administrative responsibility for conducting the examinations.

24. Working on the basis of the recommendations of the Staff/Management Coordination Committee, as approved by the Secretary-General, and in close cooperation with CEB, the Examinations and Tests Section is responsible for:

(a) Ensuring the preparation and validity of examination materials;

(b) Ensuring the confidentiality of all materials and providing for security at all stages of the examination process;

(c) Coordinating with designated Secretariat staff the preparation of materials at different stages of the examination;

(d) Arranging for the issuance of an information circular and of sample examination papers;

(e) Making arrangements for simultaneous world-wide conduct of the examinations;

(f) Convoking all candidates to the written and oral examination, after consultation with CEB;

(g) Ensuring the objectivity of examination procedures at all stages of the examination, working in close cooperation with CEB and the specialized boards;

(h) Providing ex officio members for each specialized board and for the general paper as representatives of the Director of Personnel;

(i) Working directly with consultants and ensuring maximum security while doing so;

(j) Arranging for the production and printing of all materials under maximum security conditions;

(k) Arranging for the dispatch of materials and storage at centres under maximum security conditions;

(l) Providing support and assistance to the examination at all stages.

Languages of the examination

25. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 37/235 D of 21 December 1982, candidates participating in the examination shall be permitted to take the examination in any of the working languages of the regional commissions, with due regard to the requisite proficiency in one of the working languages of the Secretariat. In order to demonstrate such proficiency, all candidates will have to take section 2 of the general paper in either English or French. Alternatively, candidates may elect to take the whole written examination in a working language of a commission other than English or French and to sit for a special language test in either English or French. An application form is annexed to administrative instruction ST/AI/384/Add.1 for that purpose. In all cases, the oral examination must be taken in either English or French. Additional information on the format of the written examination as well as lists of topics that may be helpful in preparing for the examination will be included in a separate information circular and will, to the extent possible, be made available in all the languages of the regional commissions. Sample questions are available at all duty stations.

Marking of the examination

26. The specialized board of examiners for each occupational group will organize the marking of the examination papers, which will remain anonymous. Each specialized board will then submit to CEB a list of the candidates (who are not identified by name) in ranking order, with its recommendation on the number of candidates to be convoked to the oral examination on the basis of the results of the written examination. The number of candidates convoked for the oral part of the examination will normally be three times the number of posts available in that occupational group, it being understood that more or fewer candidates may be convoked if CEB considers it to be warranted. The oral examinations will be graded separately by each member of the specialized board of examiners interviewing the candidates, without relation to the grading of the written test.

27. The candidates for each occupational group will be ranked on the basis of their combined scores in the written and oral parts of the examination. Bearing in mind the provision of Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/173 that the competitive examination procedure is to "provide eligible staff members with an opportunity to compete for selected posts for which they qualify" and taking into account the level of difficulty of the examination as a whole, the specialized boards will make recommendations as to the level above which the candidates will be considered to be qualified to perform at the Junior Professional level. The final ranking of the candidates by occupational groups will be established by CEB on the basis of these recommendations. The recommendation concerning the qualification of candidates to perform at the Junior Professional level and the final ranking will be carried out with full respect for anonymity.

Allocation of posts and promotion

28. Successful candidates will be promoted against the posts selected for the examination. The Office of Human Resources Management, in cooperation with CEB, will be responsible for the assignment of successful candidates to posts in the occupational groups in which they have succeeded after taking into account, in

order of priority, the ranking of the candidates in the examinations, the stated preferences of the candidates and the relevant views, if any were put forth, of the departments or offices in which the posts are located. In the event that within an occupational group there is an unused post (or posts) because there were insufficient candidates meeting the requirements to perform at the Junior Professional level, the unused quota would be allocated to the occupational group that has the largest number of unplaced successful candidates, up to the limit of available posts in that occupational group. Should there be two or more occupational groups with the same number of successful unplaced candidates, the unused quota would then be allocated to that occupational group with the smallest number of candidates who have been placed.

29. CEB will make the final recommendations to the Secretary-General with regard to the assignment of successful candidates. When approved by the Secretary-General, the recommendations of CEB will be implemented.

30. Successful candidates will normally be expected to serve at least three years in their new post. Candidates who do not wish to be assigned to the post or posts available to them relinquish ipso facto their claim to promotion under the 1993 competitive examination and consequently the next ranked unplaced candidate who has been certified as having met the minimum professional standard for promotion will be offered the post after confirmation by CEB. If a candidate who is promoted separates from the Organization within six months of the implementation of the promotion, the next-ranked unplaced candidate who has been certified as having met the minimum professional standard for promotion will be offered the post after confirmation by CEB. In the event that no candidate is available in the relevant occupational group, the unused quota should be allocated to the occupational group that has the largest number of unplaced successful candidates, up to the limit of available posts in that occupational group. Should there be two or more occupational groups with the same number of successful unplaced candidates, the unused quota would then be allocated to that occupational group with the smallest number of candidates who have been placed.

31. After the approval of the Secretary-General of the recommendations of CEB, no additional posts will be considered for placement of candidates from that year's G to P examination.

32. All successful candidates in the competitive examination for promotion to the Professional category of staff members from other categories will be recommended for promotion to the P-2 level. The salary step at the P-2 level will be determined on the basis of staff rule 103.9 on salary policy in promotions. At duty stations where a General Service staff member's remuneration, when computed for promotion purposes under that rule, exceeds the ceiling step of P-2, the staff member will be paid a personal transitional allowance in an amount sufficient to meet the requirements of that rule. As a result of the post adjustment system, a loss in net salary may be experienced for staff who change duty stations.

33. The names of the successful candidates placed will appear in the information circular on appointments, promotions and other staff changes, which is issued quarterly. The effective date of promotion of the successful candidates placed will be the first of the month in which they assume the functions of the post for which they have been selected.

Informing candidates of results

34. The Examinations and Tests Section will, upon completion of the examination, communicate in writing to all candidates their ranking achieved in each section of the written examination as well as whether or not they achieved a mark of 30 per cent or higher in the overall written part of the examination. Those candidates who have taken the oral examinations will also be given their ranking in that part of the examination. The Office of Human Resources Management will also issue a general report on the conduct and results of the examination to the staff.

General

35. Staff members who have complaints with respect to the procedures and arrangements for the examination should contact CEB within 10 working days of the event which gave rise to the complaint.

36. The Office of Human Resources Management will provide a secretariat to service the boards.

37. In the light of experience with the examinations, the procedures will be reviewed and modified as necessary.